

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Administration for Children and Families  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families  
Children's Bureau

**FINAL REPORT**  
**MISSOURI CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW**

**March 2004**  
**With Executive Summary**

## **Final Report: Missouri Child and Family Services Review Executive Summary**

This document presents the findings of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the State of Missouri. The CFSR assesses State performance on seven child welfare outcomes pertaining to children's safety, permanency, and well being and on seven systemic factors related to the State's capacity to achieve positive outcomes for children and families. The Missouri CFSR was conducted the week of December 8, 2003 (in Federal fiscal year 2004). The findings were derived from the following documents and data collection procedures:

- The Statewide Assessment, prepared by the State child welfare agency – the Department of Social Services, Children's Division (CD).
- The State Data Profile, prepared by the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which provides State child welfare data for the years 1999 through 2002;
- Reviews of 50 cases at three sites in the State (Jackson County [Kansas City], Jasper County, and St. Louis County).
- Interviews or focus groups (conducted at all three sites and at the State-level) with stakeholders including, but not limited to children, parents, foster parents, all levels of child welfare agency personnel, collaborating agency personnel, service providers, court personnel, and attorneys.

A key finding of the Missouri CFSR was that the State is not in substantial conformity with the seven child welfare outcomes assessed through the CFSR. However, in one of the CFSR sites (Jasper County) case review findings revealed that the site met the criteria for substantial conformity for Safety Outcome 1 (Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect), Safety Outcome 2 (Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate), Well-Being Outcome 2 (Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs), and Well-Being Outcome 3 (Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs). In that site, 100 percent of the cases reviewed were rated as a Strength for 12 of the 23 items.

Despite the high level of performance of the Jasper County site on many outcomes, the performance of all three sites was quite low for Permanency Outcome 1 (Children have permanency and stability in their living situations). This outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in only 34.6 percent of the foster care cases reviewed. The outcome was substantially achieved in 58 percent of Jackson County cases, 17 percent of Jasper County cases, and 12.5 percent of St. Louis County cases. Although information from the State Data Profile and the CFSR case reviews indicates that CD has achieved success in ensuring that children who leave foster care do not re-enter within 12 months, CFSR findings also demonstrate that CD is not consistent in its efforts to establish appropriate permanency goals in a timely manner or achieve permanency for children (through adoption, reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives) in a timely manner.

Case review and stakeholder interview findings suggest that barriers to achieving permanency in a timely manner can be attributed to a tension between CD and the courts with regard to adherence to the provisions of ASFA. Stakeholders noted that some courts in the State do not support the Federal timeframes pertaining to permanency established by the Adoption and Safe Families Act. Although the agency and the courts engage in several joint initiatives, the achievement of permanency is hampered by a lack of clarity regarding the respective roles of child welfare children's service workers and court personnel in making permanency decisions.

Stakeholders also expressed the opinion that key barriers to achieving adoptions in a timely manner pertain to the process of filing for termination of parental rights (TPR). Stakeholders reported that in many instances, CD does not file for TPR in a timely manner due to the following factors: (1) an insufficient number of State attorneys assigned to represent the agency in all court matters, including filing for TPR; (2) a perception of the agency and the courts that children age 12 and older and children with behavioral issues are "unadoptable;" and (3) an unwillingness on the part of the courts to hear a TPR petition unless an adoptive family has been identified for the child.

Another area of concern with regard to State performance on the child welfare outcomes pertained to Well-Being Outcome 1 (Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs). This outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in only 42.0 percent of the cases reviewed. Performance on this outcome varied across CFSR sites. The outcome was determined to be substantially achieved in 83 percent of Jasper County cases, compared to 29 percent of Jackson County and St. Louis County cases. CFSR findings for this outcome indicate that CD is not consistent in meeting the services needs of children, parents, and foster parents; involving children and parents in the case planning process; and ensuring that agency social workers have sufficient contact with the children and parents in their caseloads.

In addition to the concerns pertaining to permanency and well-being, CFSR findings indicate that CD is not consistent in its efforts to address the safety concerns of children who come into contact with the child welfare system. Case review findings indicate that CD is not initiating responses to maltreatment reports in accordance with State-established timeframes on a consistent basis (item 1), and that some children are not being sufficiently protected from risk of harm while in their own homes (items 3 and 4). In addition, the State did not meet the national standards for either the rate of recurrence of a substantiated maltreatment within 6 months or the incidence of maltreatment in foster care by foster parents or facility staff.

With regard to the systemic factors, the CFSR determined that the State is in substantial conformity with the factors of Statewide Information System; Quality Assurance System; Training; Agency Responsiveness to the Community; and Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention. The State did not achieve substantial conformity with the systemic factors of Case Review System or Service Array.

The overall findings with regard to the State's performance on the safety and permanency outcomes are presented in table 1 at the end of the Executive Summary. Findings regarding well-being outcomes are presented in table 2. Table 3 presents the State's performance relative to the national standards and table 4 provides information pertaining to the State's substantial conformity with the seven systemic factors assessed through the CFSR. A summary of major findings is presented below.